

Interview : rAndom International, digitally purified



Presented at the Carpenters Workshop Gallery, the exhibition *Before The Rain* by the creative studio [rAndom International](#) broadens our perspectives on behavioral, technological and purified human representation.

Situated at the crossroads of kinetic art and interactive installations, the seven-year-old London-based creative studio rAndom International has already dug deep into the nuances of human representation in artworks relating to movement, light, and strong yet often minimalist esthetics.

Despite their sober approach, everything in their projects is subject to change. Their strangely textured work reveals mechanisms that sometimes act like digital paintings, where light blurs the appearance and fading disappearance of the represented form. Such is the case with the materialized image of the viewer, whose moves are reinterpreted (filtered by LEDs in *Swarm Light* or *Future Yourself*, captured by light-reactive ink in *SelfPortrait* and *Study For A Mirror*) before they are programmed to disappear.

rAndom International's three thinking heads—Stuart Wood, Florian Ortkrass and Hannes Koch—draw upon a very sensitive combination of techno-

logical tools (computers, motion-capture software, LEDs, OLEDs, etc.) as well as more traditional means of representation (frame, mural printers, mirrors), which they take pleasure in transcending together through projects that question behavioral logic.

As the trio prepares to occupy The Curve at the Barbican Center in London with their installation *Rain Room*, their latest exhibition [Before The Rain](#) at the Carpenters Workshop Gallery in Paris almost seemed to be a retrospective. It was also the perfect opportunity to meet the artists behind these very particular pieces.

rAndom International was formed quite recently. Did you always have such a strong esthetic in your work from the very beginning?

rAndom was founded following our graduation from the Royal College of Art. It evolved from being a loose collective since its conception in 2002. Esthetically, we follow no pre-determined school but rather rely on our mutual intuitive understanding; I guess a unanimous contempt for waste, styling and a communal passion for minimalist/reductionist processes in the physical manifestation of our work. Artistically, we are fascinated by a broad spectrum of artists, scientists and people from the performing arts. There are different focal points at different times; for the last couple of years we've been particularly led by curiosity for the findings of behavioral and cognitive research. We've had an increasing interest in some niches of art history that deal with artists and institutions who have worked on similar themes such as Otto Piene, Group Zero,

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Howard Wise and others. It's very interesting to look at this from a contemporary perspective.

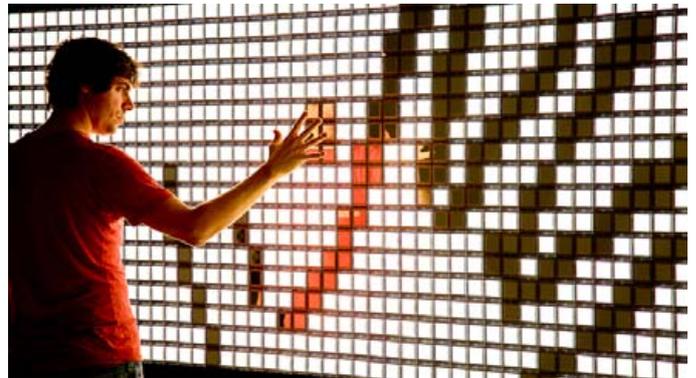
The piece *Swarm Light*, which translates patterns of collective behavior found in nature into moving light, like a swarm of bees, is fundamental in portraying the dynamic relationship between the piece and the viewer. This approach is also used by other collectives such as UVA. Is this concept of working around light mobility and viewer interaction essential to rAndom International's work process?

The response of, and exchange with, the viewer is indeed crucial to a lot of our research; the unpredictability of human behavior is such an interesting starting point for sculpture and installation work, and the latter are brilliant 'tools' to evoke, predict, test and perhaps sometimes also control behavioral responses. The medium (light, an algorithm, a piece of sensor-based software, kinetics, etc.) is hereby secondary. With pieces like *Swarm Light* we were interested in finding out if we'd be able to simulate and embody such efficient and beautiful movement in a natural fashion, and what the exposure to such a simulation would do to us: would it be possible to establish more emotional relationships between an object and the viewer if the behavior displayed by the object appears to be very natural? *Swarm Light* was the first piece where we simulated 'figurative' natural behavior, and we have since pushed the research much further into this direction, so for us it represents our approach, yes.

In *You Fade To Light*, where the viewer's moves are reflected in a grid of mirrors through a kind of symbolic silhouette, the informal interactivity between the viewer and his/her light representation ends in the programmed disappearance of this representation. There are two sides: one very real and the other one more abstract, as if the viewer is communicating with him/herself

through the piece, making it a true artistic medium, an experience of self-communication ...

The element of self-recognition through creating self-image is definitely something that plays a role. We found that this dialogue with oneself is often made much richer through physical engagement/movement than through pure image representation. Communicating with, and through, your own full body in space adds a third dimension and a new level of control over your environment (through gesture, movement or facial expression). The 'self-communication' becomes somehow more real like that.



***Self-Portrait* is quite original, in that the representation/interaction comes in the form of printing the viewer's portrait as a light-reactive screen print on canvas. Did you intend through this piece to transcend traditional media such as painting and photography, in order to explore new technological perspectives?**

We saw it more as an exploration of image value: normally images, and of course portraits, are stored somewhere, and give you a tangible (and often charming, or staged) record of how you 'were' in one particular moment in time. With *Self-Portrait*, you don't have that reassurance; you have to be completely present to 'consume' your act of portraiture, as it fades within the minute. By removing the baggage, the viewers are encouraged to experience

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themselves with more 'presence'. Or at least, to have a lot of fun by trying again and again without the fear of 'failure'.

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